Midrash Tehillim

Midrash Tehillim / Psalms 53

Midrash

Midrash Tehillim 53, Part 1

1. To the Eternal God; upon Mahalath. Maschil of David. Nabal has said in his heart (Tehillim / Psalms 53:1). The word Mahalath is to be read in the light of the verse Whoso finds a wife finds a great good (Mishley / Proverbs 18:22). Endless is the good of a good woman. And even as the good of a good woman is endless, so the evil of an evil woman is endless, as is said, I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is in the heart of them that devise evil; but to the counselors of peace is joy (Mishley / Proverbs 12:20). And who are they that enjoy peace? The children of Israel upon whom peace was bestowed, as is said, The Lord will give strength unto His
people; the Lord will bless His people with peace (Tehillim / Psalms 29:11). Abigail said to David, My lord king, if the following case were brought to you, what would you do? A poor man goes to his master and says, Show mercy unto me. Give me a morsel of bread. The master feels no obligation toward him and refuses his plea, so the poor man falls upon him and kills him. Now if such a case were brought to you for judgment, what would you do? You would feel as if gagged and would be unable to utter your judgment, for men would say Did not David do just such a thing to Nabal? When Scripture says, Let this not be unto you (1 Samuel 25:31), what do they allude to? To the corruption of the generation immediately following, dealt corruptly (Tehillim / Psalms 25:10). Nabal also claimed not to know the Holy One blessed be He, as is said, Nabal has said in his heart, There is no God. What is the heart of them that devise evil (Mishley / Proverbs 12:20). Nabal, with evil in his heart, claimed not to know David, as is said, What is David? And who is the son of Jesse? (1 Samuel 25:10). Nabal also claimed not to know the Holy One blessed be He, as is said, Nabal has said in his heart, There is no God. What can the words in his heart mean except evil thoughts? And the words immediately following, dealt corruptly (Tehillim / Psalms 53:2), what do they allude to? To the corruption of the generation of the flood, of whom it is written All flesh had corrupted their way (Bereshit / Genesis 6:12). Like them, this Nabal committed acts of unchastity. These are alluded to in dealt corruptly. Therefore, Abigail said to David, Let not my lord, I pray you, regard this base fellow (1 Samuel 25:25). Why did she call him base fellow? Because he committed acts of unchastity. As Scripture says, The sons of Eli were base men, they lay with the women that did service at the door of the Tent of Meeting (1 Samuel 2:12, 22). Another comment, What can dealt corruptly mean except that Nabal mediated idolatry in his heart? For here the verse says dealt corruptly, and elsewhere Scripture says Lest you deal corruptly, and make you a graven image (Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:16). Hence, Nabal is called a base fellow, in the sense in which Scripture uses this phrase in Certain men, base fellows, are gone out, saying, Let us go and serve other gods (Devarim / Deuteronomy 13:14).
Midrash Rabbah 53, Part 2

2. Every one of them is as dross (Tehillim / Psalms 53:4). In the similarly worded Psalm, it is written, They are all gone aside (Tehillim / Psalms 14:3), that is, men who have gone aside from the road may yet return in repentance; in this Psalm, however, it is written that every one of them is as dross, that is, every one of them is debased. They are altogether become stinking (Tehillim / Psalms 53:4). They stink from without because they overflow with wickedness from within. Another comment on Every one of them is as dross, they are altogether neelalu. They are the men of Sodom who became so debased as to bring upon themselves their burning like brazier. The word neelalu is taken as stemming from the word ah as in the verse The brazier (ah) was burning before the Holy One blessed be He, said, I declared that he children of Israel will pay atonement (Tehillim / Psalms 14:5). Another comment. The Holy One blessed be He, gave Ahithophel his punishment, He let the righteous see the heavens open unto God, and through them the sea and through them the depths (Psalm 14:5). Another comment on When the Holy One blessed be He, gave Ahithophel his punishment, He let the righteous see the heavens open unto God, and through them the sea and through them the depths (Psalm 14:5). Another comment. The Holy One blessed be He, said, I declared that he children of Israel will pay
taxes to the kingdoms, even as the gentiles pay them. By fear, I meant that you may impose the fear of excises upon them, but not that you may impose the fear of persecution upon them. Yet no fear was, for the children of Israel surrendered themselves to death, and those who remained were saved through the merit of those who were slain in the persecution, as is said God is with the righteous generation. In the similarly worded Psalm, in the verse You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, but the Lord is his refuge (Tehillim / Psalms 14:6), what is meant by the words of the counsel of the afflicted? Rabbi Judah said, They meant that the Holy One blessed be He said to the nations of the world, You built your houses of idolatry. But when I said to you, Let Jerusalem be guilt, you said Israel is to be afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not to be comforted (Isaiah 54:11). Hence, it is said, You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted. And in this Psalm it is said Have you put them to shame because God has rejected them? (Tehillim / Psalms 53:6). That is, think you that the Lord has rejected them? But was it not said long ago I will not reject them (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:44). Ot that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion. When God turns back the captivity of His people, then will Jacob rejoice and Israel will be glad (Tehillim / Psalms 53:7), but Esau and Ishmael will be vexed.